

Norwood, PA-- To honor Catholic schools' contributions to the 7th Congressional District, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) celebrated Catholic Schools Week by joining parents and volunteers at St. Gabriel's School, Norwood, PA today to thank them for their commitment to serving students throughout the community and address the importance of Catholic education. — Congressman Sestak joined St. Gabriel's Principal, Kate Clair, Mayor George McClosky of Norwood, Mayor Theodore Bathurst of Glenolden, Council President Peter Subers of Prospect Park, Police Chief Mark DeVecchio of Norwood, Police Chief Michael Donahue of Glenolden, approximately 30 parents, and school volunteers. The pastor of St. Gabriel's parish, Rev. J. Thomas Heron, was also present at the celebration. Congressman Sestak addressed the group about the current state of Catholic schools and his support of Catholic education.

"Catholic schools are being forced to close due to declining enrollment, increasing operating costs, and limited staff resources" said Congressman Sestak. "I am aware that Catholic schools are an invaluable part of the 7th Congressional district and last year alone they saved taxpayers in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia over \$97 million and simultaneously produced graduation rates and standardized test scores that are significantly above the national average. I have been working to protect Catholic schools and build partnerships to ensure they have the resources they need."

Congressman Sestak added that more Catholic schools are closing each year and that this trend is problematic at a national and local level. In the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, there are currently 184 elementary schools serving 59,607 students, while in 2002 there were 211 elementary schools serving 78,921 students. Delaware County alone has lost five Catholic schools in the past five years. Congressman Sestak is a graduate of St. Kevin's Catholic School in Delaware County.